

SECRET

60-6092

31 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-COMPTROLLER *LBW*

SUBJECT: Analysis of the Matthias Paper Case

1. On 23 August, the CHICAGO TRIBUNE published excerpts from a CIA document classified "secret." How the newspaper got the document is a problem for security officials and as such is beyond the scope of this report. Publication of the document, however, has affected the Agency's public relations. It has injected CIA in the domestic political campaign - and in a way that is disadvantageous to the President. It has also had considerable repercussion abroad. In retrospect, there are lessons to be drawn from this case which, if applied, would minimize the impact of such a security breach in the future.

2. The wording on the cover sheet is ambiguous as to how much institutional authority is behind this paper:

1. This paper was written by Mr. Willard Matthias of the Board of National Estimates and has been twice revised and supplemented after Board discussion. It has general Board approval, though no attempt has been made to reach complete agreement on every point of it.

2. It is circulated for information.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES: Sherman Kent,
Chairman. (Underlining added).

On the one hand, there are caveats: the fact that it was written by one man, that "no attempt has been made to reach complete agreement," and that "it is circulated for information." On the other hand, the underlined portions above indicate the author's standing as a member of the Board, the fact that the Board has taken it up and discussed it, that it has given general approval to it, and that the Chairman of the Board, acting for the Board, has authorized its circulation. It is a cardinal rule that

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FILE

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all documents must be worded with absolute precision so that there can be no misunderstanding as to their import. What Secretary Rusk tried to convey in his background briefing - that this is a "think-piece"; one man's opinion; not an official, formally-approved CIA or USIB document, let alone a policy statement - should have been made evident on the covering memorandum. An analogy comes to mind in those DDP documents that depart from factual reporting to give a field evaluation. They are carefully hedged. Their purpose is made obvious - they are "aids to understanding the operational environment," etc.

3. The name of the author should not have appeared on the document. This is a departure from the usual intelligence practice. While it could not be foreseen that there would be a security leak, there is no reason for departing from the practice. If a leak does occur, as it did, it makes the author a target for press inquiries.

4. The paper that was "secret" in February was declassified and stamped "official use only" in June and given wider circulation. While ironically, the paper that was leaked was the "secret" version, it should be realized that removing the classification and substituting the administrative control indicator "official use only" increased the chances of a leak a hundredfold. "Official use only" is not a security classification. In other parts of the Government, such documents are frequently shown the press. On the security side, while this document may not contain identifiable classified material, it was written by a man with full access to classified intelligence materials and full knowledge of U.S. policy positions. No matter that the paper represents one man's subjective evaluation, the same paper could not have been written by someone without access to classified materials.

5. Secretary Rusk, in his efforts to show that the paper was basically a scholarly exercise rather than an intelligence or policy document, said that it had been submitted to a magazine and rejected. It was a mistake to say this. It strengthened the impression of some that CIA was trying to get this paper out. Thus, the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE's editorial, "Leaky CIA" and the remark of a Congressional aide, "It sounds like your Soviet economy story all over again."

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6. The attempt to take the edge off the CHICAGO TRIBUNE's "exclusive" and to put the Matthias paper in its proper perspective by having Rusk surface it and explain it on background has something to be said for it, but in retrospect, it would have been preferable to wait and see what would be stressed and what the impact would be. As it turned out, the CHICAGO TRIBUNE story and headline addressed itself mainly to the portions on the USSR in the Matthias paper. The headline read: "Theory of Soviet Amiability Revived in Secret CIA Report." Only 2 of 29 paragraphs dealt with Vietnam in the TRIBUNE story. However, all the stories filed after Rusk's briefing concentrated on Vietnam. Thus, the Secretary's fears highlighted the Vietnam portion of the report and generated the stories on Vietnam.

7. In covering this story the press has not been unkind to CIA, with the possible exception of two editorial comments. The NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE's editorial, "Leaky CIA" is based on the idea that the Agency cannot meet the secrecy requirements of an intelligence Agency, with the implication that CIA is to blame for the security breakdown or that CIA wanted to get the story out. The NEW YORK DAILY NEWS editorial calls the Matthias paper a "defeatist document about the South Vietnam war" and wonders why, if it does not represent Administration policy, it got "all this publicity." Both conservative and liberal newspapers tend to see in the story confirmation of their view that the war is not going well in Vietnam, but they draw different conclusions. For the conservatives, this means that the Administration has not done enough to win and/or that it is hiding the fact that we are losing from the people. For the liberals, this means that the Administration should no longer spurn proposals for a negotiated settlement. Finally, the timing of the story was conducive to its credibility. Events in Vietnam during the past week tended to confirm the pessimistic view reflected in the Matthias paper.

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Paul M. Chrétien
Assistant to the Director
for Public Affairs

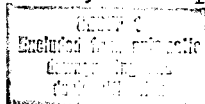
Attachment:

Summary of Press Coverage

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SUMMARY OF PRESS COVERAGE

1. The original story by Willard Edwards in 23 August Chicago Tribune was quoted by both the AP and UPI on 22 August. The AP noted that the Johnson Administration had made the Matthias study available after learning it would be published in the Chicago paper. The UPI said "official sources disclosed the existence of the document when they learned it had been offered for publication as a major outline of American policy."
2. The news agency stories carried the following headlines in 23 August papers: CIA OFFICIAL IS DOUBTFUL OF VICTORY IN VIETNAM (Washington Star), VIET VICTORY DOUBT VOICED--CIA OFFICIAL SUGGESTS NEGOTIATIONS WITH REDS (Baltimore Sun), DISSIDENT VOICE INSIDE CIA DOUBTS VICTORY IN VIETNAM (Philadelphia Bulletin), VICTORY IN S. VIETNAM DOUBTED IN CIA PAPER DISAVOWED AS POLICY (Philadelphia Inquirer), CIA VIET PAPER IS CALLED 'ONE MAN'S OPINION' (New York Journal American), CIA OFFICER DOUBTFUL OF ASIA VICTORY (Los Angeles Times), and THE CIA'S SECRET VIETNAM STUDY (San Francisco Chronicle).
3. None of the above rated banner headlines, but it is reported that a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania paper spread the story in bold print across the top of its front page. Also on 23 August, stories by byline reporters appeared in the following: RELEASE OF CIA REPORT HAS POLITICAL OVERTONES (Murrey Marder in Washington Post), A VIEW WITHIN CIA: CAN'T WIN IN VIET (Laurence Barrett in New York Herald Tribune), and CIA AIDE SUGGESTS SAIGON SETTLEMENT (Jack Raymond in New York Times) -- the latter two appearing on the front page. The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, in a report headlined ROW LOOMS ON CIA'S "CAN'T WIN IN ASIA" PAPER, predicted that the Matthias study would probably have international as well as domestic political repercussions.
4. Editorial comment has appeared in several papers. On 24 August, the New York Herald Tribune headed its editorial "Leaky CIA" and concluded that the evaluation in the Matthias study "does not help restore confidence in the CIA either at home or abroad." On the same day the New York Times editorial noted that "the publication of a Vietnam evaluation made inside of the nation's most responsible intelligence bodies adds an important new element to appraisal of the war in Southeast Asia," but it added that the document was released after a leak "as a means of denying that it represents Administration policy" although as Jack Raymond had originally reported, it reflects a view "widely held in the Government and the subject of recurrent official discussion." The evening edition of the Baltimore Sun on 24 August said the CIA analysis prepared last June as an individual aide's view "received the general agreement of key intelligence officials." The Atlanta Journal on 24 August declared that "a worse time for publication of such a report could hardly have been chosen." Certainly "our intelligence people should examine every facet of our operations in Southeast Asia," the paper said, "but this is something that is not done publicly."



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The following day the New York Daily News appended to an editorial blast at Democratic policies in contrast to Republican ones ("Challenge vs. Chicken") a second editorial describing the Matthias study as "A Defeatist Document." On 25 August the New York Post hoped that the study was representative of high-level Administration feeling, adding that "it is reassuring, moreover, to learn that this kind of tough, realistic analysis is permitted inside the CIA." The Chicago Tribune editorial on 25 August reviewed comment in the New York Herald Tribune and the New York Times, and two days later cited the "gloomy Matthias study in an editorial which declared that "the latest upheaval in South Vietnam should demonstrate to Washington the impossibility of defeating communism when the people concerned are indifferent or hostile to the undertaking."

On 26 August the St. Louis Post Dispatch noted that "it was as predictable as sunrise that Senator Goldwater would react as he did to the news that a Central Intelligence Agency official has entertained the forbidden thought of a negotiated settlement in Vietnam." The Richmond Times Dispatch on 26 August, after reviewing several "defeats" of the Johnson Administration, asserted that "to add to the confusion" the Administration "may be considering a 'negotiated settlement' in Vietnam as hypothetically proposed in a 'study' written by Willard Matthias." The paper added that a State Department spokesman "promptly denied that Matthias' paper represented a statement of the policy originally recommended by President de Gaulle." On 27 August a second editorial in the New York Post commented that "it was to be expected that Barry Goldwater would seize upon the CIA 'think piece' about South Vietnam to charge the Johnson Administration with a 'no win' policy in that area." The Christian Science Monitor on 28 August declared that "whatever might be said about some of its assessments," the CIA position paper was "manifestly right" when it spoke of the counter guerrilla effort floundering. The editorial section of the Washington Sunday Star on 30 August referred to the Matthias paper after noting that "obviously no official in the Johnson Administration is going to speak pessimistically in public."

5. News agency dispatches in the 24 August press quoting a State Department statement on the Matthias study were headlined thus: STATE DEPT. DISOWNS CIA NEUTRALITY PAPER (New York Daily News), U.S. 'DISOWNS' CIA REPORT ON 'NEUTRAL' VIET (New York Journal American), and CIA REPORT WORRIES OFFICIALS (Washington Daily News). While most bylined stories on the State Department statement, including the mention of the Matthias study, were headlined with the U.S. support of the Saigon regime aspect of

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the story (U.S. STRESSES SUPPORT FOR KHAN, HITS RIOTS by Bernard Gwertzman in the Washington Star, BACKING OF KHAN AFFIRMED BY U.S. by Tad Szulc in the New York Times, IN WASHINGTON, U.S. BUOYS UP KHANH by Laurence Barrett in the New York Herald Tribune, and U.S. DEPLORES VIET RIOTS, OFFICIAL SAYS by William Anderson in the Chicago Tribune), the Baltimore Sun story on the State Department statement by Howard Norton on 25 August was headlined CIA VIETNAM PAPER BRANDED UNOFFICIAL.

6. Senator Goldwater referred to the paper in a speech before the national convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Bylined stories in the Washington Post, the Washington Star, and the St. Louis Post Dispatch and news agency stories in other major papers on 25 and 26 August stressed in their headlines that the Senator had charged that the Johnson Administration was planning a negotiated peace in Vietnam. An A.P. story released as an insert to the Goldwater speech noted that the Administration had ordered an investigation to determine how the Chicago Tribune got the story.

7. References to the Matthias paper were also contained in reports of a Goldwater press conference on 26 August in Avalon, California. Both the New York Times and the Baltimore Sun carried byline stories on the Senator's statement that there might be some value in talks with Peking and a follow-up statement by his press Secretary Paul Wagner. The Philadelphia Bulletin quoted Mr. Goldwater as stating that "I along with many others" have to see a "lot of truth" in the CIA officer's evaluation.

8. The situation in Vietnam itself was commented on in Washington-dated stories in the Christian Science Monitor by Robert Brunn on 26 August and in the Baltimore Sun by Paul Ward on 28 August, both making reference to the Matthias paper.

9. COMMUNIST COVERAGE:

a. The Worker (New York) on 25 August headlined its first story on the Matthias paper: SECRET MEMO BY CIA ADMITS U.S. PUPPET IN VIETNAM IS LOSING.

b. Peking's New China News Agency on 23 August quoted from the Matthias paper and several other U.S. sources (Senator Morse, the New York Times, and columnist Walter Lippmann) to show that U.S. politicians and newspapers acknowledge that "it is impossible for the United States to suppress by force the South Vietnamese people who are persisting in their just and patriotic struggle."

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c. On 24 August the East Berlin Neues Deutschland carried a short news item which said: "In a report to U.S. Government organs, member of the Planning Committee of the U.S. Intelligence Service CIA Willard Matthias expressed doubts about a victory over the South Vietnamese Liberation Front."

d. The Yugoslav news agency Tanyug on 24 August carried a Washington dispatch which said "considerable concern" had been provoked by a report "unofficially attributed" to CIA about the poor prospects of a military solution in Vietnam. Tanyug concluded that "some commentators consider the document is the view not only of the author but also of the Central Intelligence Agency, which has approved it."

e. Hanoi's Vietnam News Agency on 27 August noted the "heated debate" among U.S. officials over the paper "said to have been approved by the CIA" and "considered a draft of the U.S. Government's line." VNA quoted ten lines of the paper which, it said, was distributed to the press by the State Department "because of the rumor that the Republican Party, which also possessed this report, would soon publish it in the Chicago Tribune."

f. On 31 August the Moscow radio, in a commentary for the domestic audience in the USSR, noted that the report of the CIA "specialists" on Vietnam concluded that "the only thing that the United States could attain there is a continuous deadlock."

10. OTHER FOREIGN COMMENT:

a. According to the Cairo radio, the 26 August Al-Akhbar stated that "the recent CIA report regarding the use of force in today's world" means that "the era of threatening the use of force has ended." The paper added that the reference in the CIA report "to the increased strength of the UAR and Indonesia and to their attempt to play a greater role in international affairs also constitutes a gain for peace."

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b. The 24 August press in Munich gave front-page handling to the report of the release of the Matthias study, emphasis being placed on the conflict between the alleged Matthias position and U.S. policy.

c. The European edition of Stars and Stripes gave the story prominent play, underscoring the thesis that it was only "one man's opinion."

d. The study was widely discussed in the 24 August French press, which carried excerpts generally designed to show that the French thesis on the necessity of the neutralization of Indochina was well founded. Responsible moderate papers made a clear distinction between U.S. Government policy, an Agency-wide agreed assessment, and an internal working paper. The more sensational and leftist-oriented papers played up the neutralization theme and did not explain the working-paper aspect.

e. In New Delhi on 24 August the Hindustan Times carried on an inside page a Washington-dated AP report to the effect that a CIA officer, in a memo circulated among "a few lower-ranking officials," had voiced "serious doubt that victory can be won" in Vietnam. The next day the Times of India carried its own correspondent's dispatch from Paris saying that "release of the CIA document," which allegedly supports General de Gaulle's thesis, is expected to strengthen the hand of the Pathet Lao at the tripartite meeting because they are likely to argue that a military solution is no more possible in Laos than in Vietnam.

f. In Karachi on 24 August, after Vietnamese developments had received only passing attention over the weekend, a Dawn article by Washington correspondent Ejaz Husain reported the New York Times account of the release of the Matthias study which it said caused the Administration "great consternation." Husain noted the State Department assertion that the study was not necessarily reflective of Administration views, but he commented that it still indicates doubts in some official quarters. Husain concluded: "So far those quarters have been brushed aside by warhawk elements within the Administration, especially in the State Department Policy Planning Council."

g. In Tananarive on 24 August the Malagasy Republic Government Information Bulletin carried an item which noted that the Matthias study on the war in Vietnam stated that victory was not possible for the American cause.

h. The Melbourne Herald on 24 August reported that the Matthias study assessed "victory" in Vietnam as impossible.

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NOTE: The Matthias study is not publicized in the three major U.S. weekly news magazines (Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report), but Business Week on 29 August, in an article headlined "Hopes Fade for South Vietnam," says "the CIA report is bound to shake confidence, both in Saigon and here at home, in the steadfastness and realism of U.S. policy." The magazine concludes that "high U.S. officials this week are at pains to discount the significance of the CIA study," but some are privately looking again at the possibilities of a negotiated settlement in Vietnam.

On 1 September, in a front page story headlined DELETIONS IN CIA REPORT BARED, Willard Edwards of the Chicago Tribune charges that the State Department made changes in the covering memorandum with "the apparent purpose" of downgrading the importance of "the document as a government paper representing official opinion." Edwards claims that the changes were noted when a comparison was made of the February and June versions of the study, the latter being the one "which was released to a selected group of reporters on Friday, Aug. 21."

Re Chretien Memorandum

Para. 2. "It is a cardinal rule that all documents must be worded with absolute precision . . ."etc.

True indeed; and apparently this one was so worded. Paul's analysis of the meaning of the covering memorandum is correct, and indicated that indeed our precision was almost absolute. What Secretary Rusk said about it is something again -- he was obviously not quite correct in saying that it was only "one man's opinion" -- the covering memo makes plain that it was a little more than that. It also makes plain that it was not a formally approved CIA or USIB document. As for making plain that it was not a policy paper or policy statement -- since when do we have to assert this on intelligence papers?

In short, I don't think that Paul's second paragraph is well taken at all.

Para. 3. Yes, I daresay that the name of the author should not appear. Yet the names of authors do in fact appear on many papers issued in this Agency for fairly wide distribution (ORR and OSI). The author's name was put on this piece in part to reinforce the point that it was not a formal ONE issuance

the fact that his name was on the document helped in establishing the fact that it was not an official CIA position.

Para 4. Agree; though we can't obviously confine our writings to those things which could, if leaked, be published without giving anything away.

Para 5. I agree fully.

Para 6. I don't really agree, but Paul may be right. I think that the Agency may have benefitted from the fact that the full piece was made available, because it is a good piece, and generally was so treated. Of course, if it had died on the vine with the one Chicago Tribune story that would have been better, but I doubt if it would have so died.

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